

# Balancing Work &

*Sometimes being a mother and a wage earner can be a challenge. How can you maximize your time with the kids?*

**H**ow can you ensure your children are receiving quality care? How can you afford child care so that you can work? And how can you strike a balance that also allows you to be the best employee you can be?

The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and many Utah companies are answering these questions by striving to ease the burden of juggling work and family life through innovative programs.

## Work/Life Friendly Businesses

Since 1998, DWS has recognized companies that create exceptional workplaces and businesses by effectively addressing employee work/life needs. The annual Work/Life Awards honor employers that listen to employees and strive to create and maintain a culture of equity and opportunity in the workplace. The award showcases best practices and promotes their implementation in the business community.

What does that mean to you? DWS has found that as the labor market has tightened, so has the creativity and ingenuity of businesses and business

leaders. And that means better and better work environments for employees.

Some of the best practices Utah businesses are adopting include job sharing, flex time, and telecommuting. These three work arrangements can help you spend more time with your children and less time battling traffic.

## Meeting Halfway

A “job sharing” arrangement means finding another person who is willing to work part-time and share one full-time job with you. Close coordination between the job-sharers is important to make sure no tasks slip between the cracks—but the rewards can be an excellent win-win-win situation among the two employees and their employer.

## Your Job on Your Schedule

“Flex time” is when you work a schedule that differs from traditional business hours. It may mean starting earlier and/or leaving later. It may mean working a Saturday instead of a weekday.

This arrangement has unlimited possibilities, but will depend on the type of work you do and how well your

employer is able to accommodate your needs. Some companies allow various workers to put in four ten-hour days and have a three-day weekend every week. Other companies, such as L-3 Communications, a 2007 Work/Life Award finalist, arrange all their employees’ work schedules so that they can shut the whole company down every second Friday, giving everyone a long weekend.

## Splitting the Difference

“Telecommuting” can allow you to spend significantly more time at home, even though you are spending that time working. You’ll need whatever equipment is necessary, such as a computer, high-speed Internet connection, fax and phone. This is a great solution for jobs that don’t require much personal contact with customers or coworkers.

Most telecommuters only work from home for two or three days out of the week—but the time and transportation costs saved by not having to come in to the office can be a welcome boon if you have little ones. However, telecommuting should not be seen as a solution to child care, and many employers have

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rules regarding telecommuting with small children at home.

## Taking Care of What's Important

"Onsite child and dependent care" is when companies provide child care services at the place of business so that you don't have to go elsewhere. Some Utah companies are turning their workplaces into a one-stop shop, so you can drop your children at the onsite child care facility, do your job, and pick them up, all at one convenient location.

A great example of this arrangement can be found at Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Utah—an eight-time Work/Life Award winner. Another example is the "Nicco Kids Room" at Nicholas & Company (a six-time Work/Life Award winner)—where parents can actually do their job at a workstation set up in a playroom furnished for temporary child care needs.

For more information on Utah businesses that are leading the way in work/life practices, visit [jobs.utah.gov/occ](http://jobs.utah.gov/occ) and click on "Utah Work/Life Awards."

## Making Quality Child Care More Accessible

DWS' Office of Work & Family Life/Office of Child Care is working to make quality child care available to you. Initiatives include continual quality improvement/training opportunities for child care providers statewide, and a recent increase in child care subsidy rates for eligible working

families that need a little extra help to pay for child care.

## Quality Improvement

Quality care promotes the optimal growth and development of children. During the past fiscal year, more than sixty-three thousand hours of low-cost training were accessed by child care providers to enhance their professional development and program quality. That's the equivalent of more than 30 years of 40-hour workweeks.

## Subsidy Rate Increase

Affordability of child care is a key issue. If parents cannot afford to pay for child care, they are forced to choose either poor quality child care or not working at all. This dilemma creates a choice that is either a detriment to children, or to the economy. To address this problem, the Utah legislature appropriated sufficient funding in the last legislative session to allow the Office of Child Care to raise child care subsidy rates as of July 1, 2007. The increased rates afford eligible parents better access to child care in Utah. To see the new rate table, visit [jobs.utah.gov/occ](http://jobs.utah.gov/occ).

With Utah companies working to help striving mothers succeed in their jobs and their home life, and DWS working to improve child care quality and affordability, women in Utah have more resources than ever to help balance work and life.

